



Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

5-Year Management Plan Review

Comment Synthesis

May 2002

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Comment Synthesis

This document has been created to assist the NMSP staff, the SAC, and the public in understanding and interpreting the comments received during the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary 5-Year Management Plan Review. It contains a synthesis of comments received both during public meetings and in writing through May 24, 2002. Comments received during the public meetings are organized by 21 issues and further categorized by County. In instances where comments fit in more than one category, every effort was made to place the comment in the most appropriate category when considering preparation of the final revised management plan. In addition, duplicate comments received at the same venue have been removed and comments have been edited for clarity when necessary.

Abbreviations used throughout the document

DRMP – Draft Revised Management Plan
NOAA – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association
NMSP- National Marine Sanctuary Program
SAC – Sanctuary Advisory Council
DLNR – State of Hawai`i, Department of Land and Natural Resources
NWHI CRER- Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve
USCG – United States Coast Guard
DOE – Department of Education
DOD Department of Defense
UH – University of Hawai`i
MLCD – Marine Life Conservation District
EEZ – Exclusive Economic Zone
LFA/ LFAS – Low Frequency Acoustic Sonar

Honolulu County meeting comments

Tokai University, O`ahu - May 1, 2002
(13 participants)

Acoustics

- Concerned with effects of noise pollution and vessel strikes on whales

Administration

- Increase administrative support for the whale count
- Hire an expert in volunteer programs
- Maximize staff positions to increase productivity
- An office should be added on the Big Island
- Increase budget

Boundary Modification

- Boundaries should be expanded to include be all areas surrounding the main Hawaiian Islands and NWHI
- Continue to focus efforts on education
- Boundaries should take in to account migration patterns and population estimates
- Would like to see boundary extension on O`ahu to Ka`ena Point

Document-related information

- Strategies should include a minimum number of yearly accomplishments in management plan
- A process to evaluate boundary changes should be detailed in the plan

Education

- Expand education center and educational opportunities to O`ahu and the Big Island
- Provide materials for educators that comply with DOE standards
- Increase education on the north shore of O`ahu by educating anyone who gives tours, and installing interpretive signage at Pupukea MLCD, Haleiwa Harbor and Waimea Bay
- Provide educational information on humpback whales with yacht clubs, sailing groups
- Education Center should be expanded to include the local community
- Classroom visits could be used to provide education
- Have a lecture preceding ocean count
- Educate boaters on what to do if they see a violation
- Provide education of marine debris globally

Enforcement

- Increase enforcement efforts
- Citizens could help with enforcement (e.g., community watch) with cooperation of counties and USCG.
- Increase community information on what to do when there are enforcement issues

- Publicize penalties
- Develop a sanctuary response team by having a representative that can go to necessary sites as a responder with possible enforcement capabilities.

Inclusion of Other Species

- Need to include other marine mammals
- More focus should be put on other species particularly turtles

Motorized Personal Watercrafts (MPWC)

- Tow-in jet skiing should continue
- Restrict motorized activities in sanctuary during whale season
- Limit speeds of motorized vehicles during whale season
- Concern for tow-in jet skis

Native Hawaiian Awareness

- Continue native Hawaiian cultural awareness program

Partnerships

- Build partnerships with Hanauma Bay education center
- More cooperation and collaboration with oceanography department at UH
- Build military partnership for stranding program
- Increase partnerships in international waters to target marine debris and resource protection
- Create partnerships with whale watch cruises to provide more education to the public
- Memorandum of Agreement's could be established to help share responsibilities
- Build partnerships with neighborhood boards on O`ahu

Public Outreach

- Increase awareness of Sanctuary in boundary areas by targeting schools and communities
- Increase public information on whale singing
- Increase volunteer opportunities
- An effort should be made to reach out to students to hear what they have to say about program
- Publicity and outreach should be targeted to specific groups such as school kids, and fishermen
- Increase public information about exact boundaries locations
- Increase public information on vessel strikes and impacts
- Sanctuary needs to share information on research, Sanctuary program and status of whales with public
- Better communication with the public on Sanctuary activities
- Provide certificates for going on whale watching tours

Regulations

- Need to clarify regulation language – the term “taking” not understood by the public
- 100 yd. approach regulation should not be applied to kayakers
- Concern for fishing nets
- Deal with impacts of cruise ships and aquaculture cages

Research/Monitoring

- More research and awareness on overall life cycle of humpback whales
- Population count should be taken every year
- Satellites should be used to count whales
- Increase research efforts to understand the impact of noise pollution on whales
- Work with other researchers to obtain information on other species within Sanctuary waters
- Increase public information on research projects by utilizing local newspapers
- Increase information on research projects through the Sanctuary website

Stranding Program

- Provide a recovery and rehabilitation program for stranded whales particularly calves
- Enhance stranding program

Water Quality/Pollution

- Concerned about marine debris & water quality on health of whales

Other General Comments

- Interest in long-term well-being of whales

Maui County meeting comments

Kihei Community Center, Maui - May 2, 2002

Lana`i Public Library, Lana`i - May 21, 2002

Mitchel Pauole Center, Moloka`i - May 22, 2002

(26 participants)

Acoustics

- No LFA (low frequency sonar) in waters throughout the 200 mile EEZ surrounding the Hawaiian Islands

Administration

- Need more financial support for Sanctuary educational materials and programs
- More Sanctuary personnel is needed in order for them to act as a clearing house to respond to emergencies

- Congress should provide the Sanctuary with increased funding for additional Maui staff to implement these great ideas
- Sanctuary and the SAC should take a more proactive stance as the key advocates for the humpback whales

Boundary Modification

- Moloka'i boundaries should be expanded to include entire island specifically the Kalapapa area
- Expand boundaries to include all waters surrounding the Hawaiian Islands

Document-related information

- DRMP seems general doesn't give specifics
- Some things are missing in the plan "not enough meat" and doesn't outline enforcement
- DRMP should include a prioritized list that directs funding
- DRMP should need to include more specific information on research grants and provide this information to the public

Education

- More education on approach limits
- Educate public not to be complacent because of increase in whale population
- Sanctuary is necessary to protect all ocean species
- Need more educational efforts to keep beaches clean
- Sanctuary should provide the public with more information on whale strandings
- Would like to see increased education efforts in Hawai'i's schools
- Would like to see increased education on all marine mammals
- Increase education and research on hawksbill turtles
- There should be more information available to the public through Sanctuary sponsored classes in Lahaina
- Participants of Sanctuary volunteer program should receive certificates
- A code of ethics should be developed
- The Sanctuary Education Center programs have been successful
- More educational materials should be distributed on Moloka'i
- Sanctuary should work with the Moloka'i Environmental Protection high school organization

Enforcement

- More enforcement is needed of Federal approach limits of whales
- NOAA enforcement needs more support such as increased funding, boats and communication
- Would like to see an enforcement plan that checks boats – makes use of pump station mandatory
- Enforcement to inspect boat bilge is necessary
- More monitoring of activities of those who are allowed to "legally" harass the humpbacks specifically the scientific community and the military

Inclusion of Other Species

- Include more species in the sanctuary
- Sanctuary should implement goal #7 (inclusion of other species) of the draft revised management plan ASAP
- Support for a multi-species habitat and protected species sanctuary

Military Activities

- Concerned about military activity in Sanctuary waters during whale season

Motorized Personal Watercraft (MPWC)

- Restrict jet skis/thrill crafts in all sanctuary waters during the whale season

Naturalist Training Program

- Provide various levels of naturalist training and certification based on experience
- Existing naturalists should not have to “re-learn”
- Provide a naturalist training test
- Current research findings should be included in naturalist training program
- Concern for quality and certification of naturalist program
- Evaluate naturalist training program
- Naturalist training should include education of boat crew

Native Hawaiian Cultural Awareness

- Continue to incorporate cultural knowledge in Sanctuary programs such as the ahupua`a system

Partnerships

- Increase cooperation with land-based agencies to address run-off issues
- Support water quality regulations and enforcement by working with other organizations to improve water quality particularly in harbors
- Sanctuary should take a local coordinating role in developing a local number that people can call to report ship strikes or other whale related event
- Sanctuary should be the agency that acts as clearinghouse for all significant marine events (e.g. whale strikes, pollution spills, etc)
- Sanctuary needs to address land-based issues that affect whale habitat
- Coordinate research projects and outreach efforts with Kalapapa National Historic Park

Public Access

- Concerned about the accessibility of areas such as Molokini to commercial operators

Public Outreach

- Provide more information about Sanctuary to all user groups such as the Coast Guard, whale watching boats, yacht clubs and divers
- Provide more public information on research efforts
- Develop a volunteer program to promote ocean stewardship

- Increase research information on the Sanctuary website
- Public needs to get more accessible and detailed information on the Sanctuary
- Sanctuary needs to do more outreach on meeting announcements and stranding network to Lahaina/West Maui area, boat captains and commercial operators
- Sanctuary should do more community outreach to foster support for enforcement, monitoring and compliance
- Provide better advertising and early publicity of events by posting at harbors, notifying boating community and ocean users
- Increase local community participation
- Volunteers should be made aware of enforcement agent that Sanctuary funds
- Sanctuary should sponsor whale-watching trips for school kids on Moloka`I
- Continue Moloka`i Earth Day

Regulations

- Regulate water quality
- Research the need to implement speed regulations during whale season
- Would like to see increased monitoring of 100 yard approach regulation
- Speed limits should be used to provide protection to humpback whales
- Prop guards could be used to protect whales from vessel strikes

Research/Monitoring

- Research permitting process should not be driven by Sanctuary needs
- More research should be conducted on turtle diseases
- Support research needed in an ecosystem based sanctuary
- Priority on research on whales example stranding events
- Sanctuary needs to identify areas of research interest and encourage funding and local researchers to respond to these areas of research
- In respect to monitoring – the Sanctuary should play a role in assessing research it promotes
- Sanctuary should not be directly involved in research permitting process this would be duplication of services
- Research plan needs to focus on what research needs to be done
- Concerned about hiring process for Sanctuary research coordinator
- Concerned about what is called “Sanctuary research” and when research becomes “Sanctuary research”
- Concerned about access to Sanctuary research results and reports
- Concerned about whether researchers who accept Sanctuary money are obligated to the Sanctuary
- Support for Sanctuary research coordinator
- Responsibility of research coordinator should include dissemination of information to the public
- Would like Sanctuary to work cooperatively with researchers and should not have the research coordinator add “another level”
- There needs to be a clear set of criteria for the research community to stratify and identify
- Concerned about how research priorities and project decisions are made

- Scope of research should not only be limited to prioritized list
- Sanctuary should be used as an avenue to get research out
- It should be mandatory for researches to present their finding to the public

Stranding Program

- Sanctuary should take leading role in local stranding network in Maui to facilitate better community outreach and response to stranding events
- Sanctuary can play a valuable role in stranding events like responding to public calls for information
- Other unusual event (such as calf separation) should also be collected and disseminated by the Sanctuary to the proper agency
- Sanctuary funded researches need to be closely linked to improve notification and response to strandings ensuring the availability of qualified, experienced on-site personnel
- Broaden those involved with strandings to include veterinarians and owners of big boats
- Sanctuary should follow through with the project to identify qualified researches and research groups that will respond to stranding

Water Quality/Pollution

- Take weekly water quality tests for sewage and other pollutants and provide this information to the public through the local newspaper and website
- Sanctuary should address ocean dumping and sewage
- No ocean dumping should be allowed in waters surrounding the Sanctuary
- Develop more stringent regulations and increase enforcement of ocean dumping
- Concerned about the dumping of human waste in sanctuary and all ocean waters
- Concerned about water quality particularly water run-off and land based non-point source pollution
- Concerned about water pollution including sewage from homes and hotels and runoff
- Goal #7 (inclusion of other species) ties into water quality and impact on other species

Other General Comments

- Concern as to what may be allowed 5 years from now
- Concerned about the number of vessels that surround/approach a pod of humpback whales
- The Sanctuary should create an unbiased list of all available whale watch tours
- Sanctuary should play the role of gathering and dissemination information

Kaua`i County meeting comments
Radisson Kaua`i Beach Hotel, Lihu`e - May 3, 2002
(20 participants)

Acoustics

- Sanctuary needs to address Navy sonar and NPAL and its affect on whales and habitat
- Sanctuary should collect baseline data regarding effects of sonar and NPAL in water

Administration

- Sanctuary should spend more money on funding research instead of spending money to hire a research coordinator (in regards to page 63 of DRMP)
- Research should be one of the top funding priorities
- Sanctuary needs to show more accountability for State's role in Sanctuary program
- Sanctuary needs more power
- Seek additional funding sources

Boundary Modification

- Sanctuary should put more priority on enlarging Sanctuary
- Sanctuary should include entire Hawaiian archipelago
- Kaua`i boundaries need to be extended to Lihu`e or further
- Review boundaries for entire island of Kaua`i and set clear criteria
- Boundaries should include all of the humpback whale habitat

Document-related information

- Wording on page 17 "duplicity" indicates NWHI is not included in management plan
- SAC comments and top administrator's comments should be made available for public review
- DRMP need to explain pg. 20 and/or eliminate "Hanama`ulu Bay"
- Sanctuary should indicate/identify to public how original objections to Sanctuary designation have been resolved, unresolved or remain
- DRMP should address what Sanctuary will do if things in Management Plan are not completed
- Management Plan should be holistic and comprehensive including mitigating adverse impacts

Education

- Increase public awareness of Sanctuary in school system by making educational materials available to schools
- Equipment rental vendors should be responsible for educating users
- Have more information and signage at lookout points
- Include educational materials with local news events

Emergency Response

- Put emergency response protocols in place for public health and safety

Enforcement

- Sanctuary needs to clarify its priority in regard to enforcement of sonar testing
- Need to increase enforcement efforts
- Increase public education on violations to visitors
- Enforcement should focus on education
- Decrease violations by working with tour operators

Inclusion of Other Species

- Sanctuary should put more priority on enlarging Sanctuary, including more species and functions
- Sanctuary should be multi-species

Military Activities

- Sanctuary should address military activities that affect humpback whales and habitat

Native Hawaiian Cultural Awareness

- Support native Hawaiian culture program
- Get more involved with native Hawaiians

Partnerships

- Sanctuary should act as a bridge between boaters, scientists and managers
- Sanctuary should provide a protocol and datasheet for boaters to record their daily sightings
- Sanctuary needs to evaluate partnerships with other government agencies particularly the State of Hawai`i

Public Outreach

- Need more public information on sonar testing and NPAL
- Sanctuary management should take a role in public advocacy involving sonar issues and health of whales and habitat
- Sanctuary needs to let public know of their involvement in rescue program
- Sanctuary should create a momentum of public support
- Expand program through volunteers
- Increase Sanctuary advertising
- Broaden education and outreach to entire community
- Ask interact clubs (Kaua`i school groups) to organize fundraisers
- Consider whale adoption programs
- Seek and educate political advocacy and community to take ownership
- Sanctuary program needs to improve its image to the entire community
- Improve communication of meetings

Regulations

- If the Sanctuary encompassed entire habitat careful consideration of regulations vs. public use needs to be a fair balance

- Should not place restrictions on individual users

Research/Monitoring

- Sanctuary should prioritize monitoring and address predation
- Sanctuary needs to address long-term ecological monitoring of habitat as referred to on pg. 12 of the Draft Revised Management Plan (DRMP)
- Long-term ecological monitoring should also include water quality and habitat
- Increase funding for water quality monitoring

Stranding Program

- Sanctuary should have a rescue/rehabilitation program to address entanglement of any endangered species including humpback whale
- Mammal stranding protocol should be a Sanctuary-State partnership

Other General Comments

- Sanctuary should concentrate on protection of whales not people

Hawai`i County meeting comments

King Kamehameha Beach Hotel, Kailua-Kona - May 8, 2002

Naniloa Hotel, Hilo – May 9, 2002

(12 participants)

Acoustics

- Need to address low frequency sonar in DRMP
- Sanctuary should strengthen position on Low Frequency Sonar (LFAS) that does not allow sonar anywhere in the ocean
- No sonar should occur between Hawai`i and Alaska during seasonal migration of humpback whale

Administration

- Sanctuary should have an office and program similar to the Maui program on the Big Island
- Provide permanent Big Island staff to advocate for Big Island concerns

Boundary Modification

- Expand Sanctuary boundaries
- Determine ideal size of Sanctuary without military/harbor consideration then work backwards (in regards to page 117 of DRMP)

Document-related information

- Support for Sanctuary goals outlined in DRMP

Education

- Commercial whale watching should be more involved in education the school kids
- Provide educational information for boaters in the newspaper throughout the whale season
- Develop a naturalist program for boat crews to educate their customers and build awareness of humpback whales that visit Sanctuary water
- Develop an Education Center on the Big Island

Emergency Response

- Clarify responsible party of hazardous spill response

Enforcement

- Provide better enforcement of boundaries to prevent intrusive maritime activities in Sanctuary
- Provide more money for enforcement on all islands
- Management Plan needs clarification on enforcement agency and authority in dealing with alterations of the seabed and discharge within Sanctuary waters (pg. 38 of DRMP)
- Need stronger Federal oversight of State and Local enforcement efforts

Inclusion of Other Species

- Develop an ecological Sanctuary by taking into account entire ecosystem
- Include turtles even if it requires boundary changes
- Goal #7 is critical – include additional species

Military Activity

- All military research should be kept out of Sanctuary
- Develop a process to deal with military activities on a case by case review of exceptions

Motorized Personal Watercraft (MPWC)

- Do not allow jet skis or high speed thrill crafts in areas bordering Sanctuary waters

Partnerships

- Coordinate with other agencies such as DLNR and SeaGrant to provide community participation on the Big Island
- Develop partnerships with DOE and whale-watching tours to improve educational activities for school kids
- Develop partnerships with National Park Service on Kaho`olawe
- Develop cooperative relationships with National Park Service and other interested parties to protect species within Punalu`u community
- Develop a group similar to an advisory council to look at Big Island community and coasts to advise Sanctuary program

- Develop a partnership with Hilo Outdoor Circle to provide more activities on the Big Island

Public Outreach

- Provide more community events on the Big Island
- Provide info to boaters during DLNR license renewal process
- Provide whale-watching team contests and prizes similar to bird-watching programs in Texas including a fluke identification booklet with points

Research/Monitoring

- Enforce more transparency in university research activities that are occurring in Sanctuary waters including funding and funding sources (e.g. DOE, DOD)
- Increase research efforts on humpback whales

Stranding Program

- Develop a calf corral holding pen for strandings

User Fees/ Permits

- Aggressively increase user fees and permits for all Sanctuary users

Water Quality/Pollution

- Keep CO2 activity out of Sanctuary waters
- Keep noise out of Sanctuary waters

Other General Comments

- Be less sensitive to commercial interests

Other comments received through May 24, 2002

Acoustics

- LFAS must be halted pending further scientific study

Administration

- Increase funding for research significantly
- Increase budget for the Sanctuary to perform their job effectively

Boundary Modification

- The Sanctuary boundaries should be expanded without regard to human activity
- Include waters surrounding Kaho`olawe
- Extend boundaries to incorporate Kalae east to Kamehame Bay, southeast shoreline and especially Punalu`u Bay

Document-related information

- Suggest change to Section RM-2 at the end of the first Strategic Summary to read “Any research project with potential for deleterious effects on the humpback whale will be reviewed by the National Marine Fisheries Service’s permit application process and further review by the Sanctuary”
- The DRMP should not delay or defer the flood control project in Kahuku
- Use the Hawaiian name for all species mentioned in the DRMP
- Eliminate redundancy and story-telling in the document
- Clarify performance measures and disclosure
- Make explicit in Plan any research related cooperation or collaboration relevant to the North Pacific stock of humpback whales
- Regarding fishponds – pg 16 – ignores research showing stone barriers greatly alter water and sediment flow and distribution
- (Pg. 21 paragraph 5) correct word to be used for multiple species of fish is fishes
- (Pg. 22 paragraph 2) SCUBA diving should not be considered as an important activity
- (Pg. 65 and 70 respectively) Peer-reviewed publications should be an intended product from sections RM-1 and RM-2
- Pg. 20 of DRMP referring to ports and harbors is confusing

Education

- Sponsor annual student and teacher conferences to learn about the sanctuary and ways to help
- Coordinate with the science department of high schools state-wide to advise them on professional opportunities in ocean-related industries to extend volunteer efforts
- Increase educational outreach/public events to other islands within the Sanctuary
- Support for evaluation of the educational program of other sanctuaries for possible inclusion in Hawai`i’s program
- Implementation of educational goals should incorporate a list of yearly goals
- Hire a qualified, full-time Education Director

Emergency Response

- Implementation of a threat assessment before the end of 2002
- Implementation of management interventions to address priority threats identified through the threat assessment process

Enforcement

- Development of a zoning plan for Sanctuary waters, and promulgation of regulations to adopt enforceable rules for each zone, to be based on the threat assessment and other information on the location of sensitive habitat in Sanctuary waters
- Expand enforcement to other parts of the Sanctuary
- Increase enforcement of laws pertaining to endangered species

Inclusion of Other Species

- Protect additional resources and species in the Sanctuary such as sea turtles, dolphins, and monk seals
- Earlier review of other significant natural resources than 2007 deadline

Motorized Personal Watercraft (MPWC)

- Ban thrill crafts statewide, not just on Maui

Native Hawaiian Cultural Awareness

- Use the Hawaiian name *Kohola* for humpback whale identification
- Provide individual presentations by cultural educator at schools

Partnerships

- Work with the NWHI CRER to develop a single Hawaiian Islands NMS
- Form a DLNR committee comprised of Division representatives to advise State co-manager on projects
- Collaborate on research and protection of the humpbacks beyond Hawai'i to include their overall range

Public Outreach

- Strengthen community input through the SAC
- Include a volunteer coordinator on all islands
- Support for development of volunteer training handbook

Regulations

- The Sanctuary should put a limit on whale watching boats

Research/Monitoring

- Concern about the ecology of the whole sanctuary and the plan does not present a plan for monitoring ecological conditions specifically studies of coral reef habitat and water quality monitoring
- Research and monitoring action plan needs to include other endangered species of mammals, birds or turtles that inhabit the waters of the Sanctuary
- Monitor the habitat of the whales
- Clarify criteria for prioritizing research projects
- Incorporate the best methods for projecting future changes
- Promote a cooperatively developed HHHB catalogue similar to that used in the NE region
- Investigate the taking of black coral

Stranding Program

- The DRMP should address strandings of whales on shores of the islands
- A team should be put together to deal with stranding events incorporating all interested agencies both government and private that take into account the importance of Native Hawaiian cultural practices during stranding events
- Include opportunities for volunteers to assist in emergency/rescue missions

Water Quality/Pollution

- Sanctuary needs to address water pollution
- Sanctuary needs water quality monitoring, maintenance and enforcement

Other General Comments

- Garbage, plastic and netting debris clean-ups need to be increased